

Status of Fish Habitat in East Coast Vancouver Island Watersheds (1995-2002)

R.A. Tony Litke and Scott Manning

British Columbia Ministry of Water, Air and Land Protection

Abstract

Two-thirds of the population of British Columbia resides in the Georgia Basin an area which makes up less than 3% of the total land area of the province. This Georgia Basin area of B.C. has an abundance of small, second-order streams, many which originate in private forested lands, then continue on through agricultural and urban environments, including the Trans-Canada highway. The fish habitat of these streams is severely impacted as a result of these obstacle modifications in many situations. We examine the in-stream habitat of nearly 90 small streams and compare the results to a standard for good habitat established by Federal and Provincial agencies. The results of these series of stream assessments over the past 7 years, indicates problem areas in the stream habitat. We found: excessive sediment, low summer discharge; lack of large woody debris (LWD); stream cover; pool area; and development. We make suggestions to protect or rehabilitate the study streams. The health of east-coast Vancouver Island streams, and the dependent fish populations are at severe risk if these concerns are not addressed.